THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. II. June 26, 1936 Tammuz 6, 5696 No. 10

EDITORIALS

THE ETHICAL PROBLEM IN PALESTINE

THE ATLANTIC CITY CONFERENCE

THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

ZIONISM AND THE COMMUNISTS

by Ira Eisenstein

FAITH AND REASON

by Abraham S. Halkin

Published by

THE SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM

15 West 86th Street, New York, N. Y.

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The RECONSTRUCTIONIST is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues starting in October, by The Society for the Advancement of Judaism, 15 West 86th St., New York, N. Y. Subscription $1.00 a year; foreign $1.25; individual copy 10 cents. Entered as second class matter January 9, 1935, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.
The editorials represent the opinions of the editors only.

EDITORIALS

With this issue, THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST suspends publication until the fall.

The Ethical Problem in Palestine

APPARENTLY, the communists are not alone in their attacks on the Zionists. It is a common occurrence to hear communists say that the Jews in Palestine are ousting Arabs from their land at the point of British bayonets, but it is a shock to read in the "Christian Century" that the Zionists propose "to work the problem out in terms of the bayonets of an imperialist power with its inevitable consequences in terms of political, racial and religious ill will. . . ." Opposition to constructive Jewish enterprise in Palestine certainly makes strange bedfellows.

The "Christian Century" asserts that the British are creating in Palestine "an ethical and religious problem of the first order." We insist that the settlement of Jews in Palestine, far from creating an ethical problem, contributes to the solution of one. The ethical problem involved is the problem of righting a wrong of many centuries' standing. The Jews of the world have been a homeless and wandering people, strangers in every land, oppressed as a minority wherever they lived.

When the World War came to a close, an attempt was made by the nations of the world to offer the Jews some redress for their agelong suffering. There was no political value to any nation in favoring the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Certainly the Congress of the United States had nothing to gain by approving the project.

The fact of the matter is that the British have not cooperated to the full in the solution of this ethical problem. They have placed obstacles in the path of the Jewish resettlement. In the internal administration of the country, the Palestine government subsidizes Arab schools completely; Jewish schools have to be maintained for the greatest part by Jewish funds, and receive only a very small subsidy from the government. Arabs are granted government lands on which to settle; Jews have to pay for every inch of the land they occupy, and in addition, supply the greatest share of the taxes used to purchase the government land for Arabs. Jewish immigration into Palestine is regulated by a carefully scrutinized quota; there is absolutely no control over the immigration of Arabs into Palestine. The Grand Mufti and his ilk are on the payroll of the Palestine government, are in practically autocratic control of the Highest Moslem Council which controls hundreds of officials and thousands of pounds of state and other moneys. There is virtually no interference with them by the government; in fact, when disorders break out, as they did during the last few

weeks, under the influence of high Moslem authority, young Arab scouts are called in to keep "order."

But as long as the question of ethics has been raised, it would be well to ask the righteous editors of the "Christian Century" whether they know of any system of ethics which justifies the actions of the Arabs to the Jews in Palestine. Is it ethical to shoot innocent men and women on the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv? Is it ethical to fire on buses, to blow up trains, to uproot and burn forests? Is it ethical to apply racketeering methods in order to force Arabs to attack Jews? Perhaps it is not sufficiently well known that young Arabs are getting $30 a month to go marauding, and that they are threatened with violence if they refuse. Is it ethical to treat refugees from Poland and Germany with the same bloodthirsty pillage from which they have just managed to escape?

Let us see the other side of the picture. During all these weeks, when scores of Jews have been murdered and wounded, and during which time not one of the Arab murderers has been apprehended, not one Arab has been attacked by a Jew. What an epic of moral restraint is being enacted in Palestine! What self-control, what discipline, what noble resistance to every impulse to avenge! Can our liberal friends see no ethical significance in these manifestations of moral power?

Let it be clearly understood that the Jews in Palestine do not intend to work out the problems in terms of British bayonets. Every time they have to be protected by the British troops from vicious assault, they are sorely grieved. They realize that their future is bound up with the future of the Arab people, and that every time they are forced to be defended against the Arabs, they are removed that much further from cooperation with them. The leaders of Palestine Jewry even at this time would be only too eager to come to some understanding with the Arab population. There is no thought whatever of vengeance or retaliation; and that is the real implication of Weizmann's message to the Mandates Commission, which the "Christian Century" misinterprets. When Weizmann asks for increased immigration "to render the structure of the Jewish national home immune from any atack," he does not mean what the "Christian Century" says he means, namely, that "British bayonets are expected to hold the Arabs in subjection until the Jewish population in Palestine has become large enough to do its own suppressing of Arab dissenters." He means that the sooner the Jewish population increases to the point where Arabs will respect Jewish rights, the sooner will the Jews be able to dispense with British protection, and hence, the sooner will Jews and Arabs be able to work out a *modus vivendi* without the bungling interference of the British.

The Atlantic City Conference

THE recent conference of social workers, educators, and center executives held in Atlantic City was significant for the increased attention given by the social workers to the elaboration and formulation of a positive Jewish program, and for the increased interest on the part of many of the social workers in Palestine and in Jewish communal life here.

It is true that there are still a few executives in social work holding key positions in their communities, who are what has been designated as assimilationists in their point of view towards Jewish life. It is also true that a great many of the rank and file of the practitioners in social work are still far from positive in their attitude towards Palestine or towards Jewish life in this country. However, a comparison of the conference at Atlantic City held two years ago with the one held this year will reveal what tremendous progress has been made in the past two years in the direction of a positive Jewish program.

It is necessary but to mention a few of the indications which substantiate this claim. At a joint session of the three or-

ganizations, Dr. Kohs read a brilliant paper on the content of Jewish social work, in which he analyzed what the adjective *Jewish* in social work implied for Jewish social workers and for Jewish social work. It was a remarkable paper, and even more remarkable was the fact that many other social workers and center executives as well as educators came admirably to his defense. Equally enlightening was the joint session devoted to Jewish community organization. A paper by Mr. Samuel Goldsmith of Chicago, was read in which an attack was made on the whole idea of Jewish community organization as enunciated in the pages of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST. Mr. Louis Kraft and Dr. Isaac B. Berkson, as discussants, as well as many social workers and center executives from the floor, subjected this paper to withering criticism. In all of these discussions there was evidence of an increasing consciousness of the need for real Jewish community organization. Throughout the whole conference, there were innumerable references made and many papers devoted to the problem of Jewish community organization and its implications for center work, social work and Jewish education.

Equally stimulating was the interest in Palestine. Some of the practitioners had organized a Social Workers' Chapter of the League for Labor Palestine and had aranged, in conjunction with the center executives and Jewish educators, a Palestine night at which Mrs. Goldie Meyerson spoke and Benjamin Zemach danced and recited. A vast crowd came to this Palestine night, which was held after the last session on Sunday evening, and which extended into the small hours of the morning. The community singing and the general spirit that prevailed all evening were such as never had been present at any social workers' conference hitherto. There was also a great interest in the session which the Jewish educators had arranged on *haluziut* and *haksharah*. Although about thirty people had been expected at this conference because it was to be conducted in Hebrew, more than two hundred attended and took a lively interest in the discussion.

It is to be hoped that future conferences of these three groups contribute further to the formulation of a conscious and positive Jewish community program. It is to be regretted that one of the most significant professional groups in Jewish life in this country—the rabbis—do not participate in the joint conferences. An invitation should be extended to them to join in these conferences so that the conferences might become a real meeting place of all professional and communal workers in Jewish life. Failing a conference of all four groups, an attempt at least should be made to have rabbis, center executives and Jewish educators confer together yearly. The rabbis have a vital stake in the activities of the social agencies, Jewish centers and Jewish schools, and there is no reason why they should not come together with the social workers, center workers and educators to discuss the Jewish problems which affect them all.

The Proposed Amendment To The Constitution

HAD the Supreme Court of the United States been determined to destroy confidence in itself, it could not have adopted a policy better calculated to that end than that which it has been pursuing. Decision after decision has served only to add weight to the opinion that the type of freedom with which the highest tribunal of the land is concerned is the freedom of property to exploit human beings. The last straw has now been applied to the camel's back of the patience of the American people. The Supreme Court first invalidated the Guffey Coal Act on the grounds that the Federal Government may not legislate to determine hours of labor and minimum wages, insisting that such rights are relegated to the individual states. Then with a remarkable *volte face* it declared unconstitutional the New York State Minimum Wage Law for Women on the ground that the states also

have no such right. As President Roosevelt has expressed himself, these two decisions create a No-Man's Land of the law in which neither the states nor the Federal Government possess powers of regulation.

We do not doubt that the conservative majority of the Supreme Court feels that it stands on sure legal grounds. The five members of that group will argue that ours is a government of limited powers, that there are certain things which neither the Federal Government nor the individual state legislatures may do. Their reasoning may be logical from their premise, but it is no more logical than that of the liberal members of the Court. What is clearly revealed in the divisions within the Court is that decisions of the Supreme Court, like all other human decisions, are determined not so much by abstract law as by the attitudes and prejudices with which the judges approach the law. And apparently the conservative majority of the Supreme Court refuses to take into cognizance the fact that any vital interpretation of the law must reckon with social change.

Thus the Supreme Court has put a barrier in the way of the progress of the American people, has frustrated its will and has given aid and comfort to the radicals and the revolutionaries. For, if with the machinery of American democracy it is not possible progressively to mitigate the hardships which our economic order imposes, and, if five of nine men can prevent a peaceful transformation of our economic system, then the radical who advocates a violent revolution finds his hands strengthened. He can then say with a fair show of logic that the only way out is rebellion. The last decision of the Supreme Court is of larger moment than even the tragic exploitation of women in industry which it sanctions. Unless the American people reacts positively and creatively to it, this decision may be another Dred Scott case.

The issue now is, what shall be done? There are some who recommend attempting to frame legislation which might conceivably be constitutional in the light of the decision. This, it seems to us, would be a fatal blunder. For any liberal legislation on economic issues is by no means secure, and another nullification by the Supreme Court would merely add to the irritation and resentment of the American people.

It is apparent that a constitutional amendment is the only way out. The question then remains, what form shall that constitutional amendment take? There are those who suggest an amendment to the Constitution withdrawing from the Supreme Court its right, doubtful on legal grounds at best, to declare unconstitutional the laws passed by Congress. With this approach we are by no means sympathetic. For all that the Supreme Court has fairly generally disappointed the American people, its power to declare legislation unconstitutional is not altogether an unmitigated curse. On occasion the Supreme Court has been a bulwark of civil liberties. And in these days when America is threatened with fascist reaction it may yet serve a useful function. Not that we are too optimistic that it would actually serve in that capacity, but it might conceivably do so. And that alone is enough to preserve for it the prerogative which it now possesses.

The recommendation which we have to offer to our readers is that an amendment be adopted, specifically granting to the Federal Government the power to regulate industry. The best draft of such an amendment is that of Senator Elmer Benson, Minnesota Farmer-Laborite, sponsored by the Socialist Party, numererous federations of labor, and by the Economic Conference of the Federal Council of Churches. The text of the amendment follows:

"Section 1. The Congress shall have the power to regulate, limit and prohibit the labor of persons under eighteen (18) years of age; to limit the work time and establish minimum compensation of wage earners in any or all occupations; to pro-

tect by law the right of all employees to organize and bargain collectively with their employers; to provide for the relief of the aged, invalid, sick and unemployed wage earners and employees in the form of periodical grants, pensions, benefits, compensations or indemnities from the public treasury;

To establish, acquire, operate or regulate agencies for the marketing and processing of agricultural products;

To establish, acquire and operate natural resources, properties and enterprises in manufacturing, mining, commerce, transportation, banking, public utilities and in any other business, which shall be governed democratically for the benefit of the public by commissions consisting of representatives of workers, consumers and technicians; and to legislate generally for the social and economic welfare of workers, farmers and consumers.

"SECTION 2. The power of the several states to enact social welfare legislation is unimpaired by this article, but no such legislation shall abridge or conflict with any act of Congress under this article."

Only such an amendment could prevent the last decision of the Supreme Court from turning democracy into a mockery. Only this will restore the confidence of the American people in their power through the ballot to solve the economic problems which face them.

Zionism and The Communists

By IRA EISENSTEIN

THE persistent attacks to which Zionism has been subjected by radical elements will probably be intensified by the riots in Palestine. Those who have launched these attacks will undoubtedly find corroboration for their views in the bloodshed and disorder which accompany the riots. It is therefore important that the truth about Zionism be reiterated for those who have some awareness of it, and articulated for those who consistently ignore it. Thus far it has been apparent that the achievements of Jews in Palestine are testimony in favor of Zionism only for those who have the honesty and the courage to examine and evaluate those achievements without prejudice. This the communists have failed to do. In one pamphlet after another, by their spokesman on these matters, Paul Novick, of the Jewish Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, scurrulous denunciations of Zionism have been published. Let us examine the arguments set forth by Mr. Novick and see how much cogency they possess.

I

What, specifically, are the charges made against the Zionists? First, that they oppress the Arabs, and are therefore opposed to the introduction, in Palestine, of a legislative council. They are opposed to the council because of its democratic character; the Jews are afraid that by means of this council, the Arabs may be given an opportunity to express their opinions of the Jews. "They are afraid of the introduction of any form of democratic rule, of any kind of Parliament. They openly appear before the Arab masses and before the whole world as partners in oppression, as adherents of despotic rule. . . . Jews who know so well the meaning of national oppression should not take the same road as that of the oppressors and imperialists . . . overlooking the national problem of others. . . . If it were that the council is not democratic enough such objection would be commendable. . . ."

The fact is that Zionists oppose the establishment of the legislative council be-

cause it *is not* democratic enough. It might be reasonable to assume that the Arabs, constituting a majority of the population, should have a majority of the council. But it is not reasonable to believe that such a council is democratic if the majority is determined that the minority has no right to be in the country altogether. Democracy should imply the protection of the rights of minorities; but if the very existence of such a minority is challenged, democracy certainly cannot be said to exist. Secondly, the Arab delegates themselves would not be representative of the Arab population because the right of franchise is so limited. In Jerusalem, for example, only 3,900 out of 88,000 have the right to vote.

Do Zionists fear the open expression of Arab opinion; they certainly do not. They would indeed welcome it, because the presence of the Jews in Palestine has been most decidedly beneficial to them. But the council would not give the peasants, or felaheen an opportunity to be heard. The effendis, or feudal landlords, who dominate the economic life, also dominate the political life. But even these effendis are opposed to the council. Despite the fact that they would have free sway in it, they are reactionary enough to oppose it because its existence would acknowledge the right of Jews to settle in Palestine. Furthermore, the British themselves are against the council. Recently, in the House of Commons, the Colonial Office was severely reprimanded for the attempt to foist this council on the Palestine population; the debate on this question almost precipitated a governmental crisis. Who then is for the council? Apparently, only the communists; is it not rather paradoxical that those who advocate the dictatorship of the proletariat should be the only defenders of a council which would represent only the effendis?

It is not true that the Zionists are opposed to all democratic institutions. To generalize from their opposition to the council is absolutely fallacious. For years, the labor group have been pleading for greater autonomy in the municipalities, together with increased education in local self-government. The Zionists have understood, realistically, that a national body could never possibly represent the masses unless preliminary training in democratic processes was first given on the smaller scale. The resistance to such local autonomy on the part of the British government reveals the operation of a principle which has guided British policy in Palestine—as elsewhere—the principle of "divide and rule."

Another charge against the Zionists is that they have created a landless Arab class. It is asserted that when Jews acquire land (according to the communists, always at the point of British bayonets, but as contributors to the Jewish National Fund know, always for cash), the tenant farmers are rendered homeless and landless. It is necessary first of all to envisage the Arab system of agriculture in order to appreciate the facts. The land of Palestine is owned by a handful of wealthy absentee-landlord effendis. They usually live in Paris or Cairo, or on the Riviera. The land is cultivated by felaheen, who pay the effendis for the privilege of working the soil. An extremely high percentage of the produce goes to the effendis as rent. The felaheen, unable to live on the remainder, borrow from the effendis at interest rates that go as high as 50 per cent. Before long, the effendis own the felaheen body and soul, for a few generations. Now, when the effendis sell their land, these tenants are "deprived" of their land. Was it ever theirs? Of course not; and yet, it is quite fair to ask, "What will become of them?"

What has become of them? According to official figures, there were in all Palestine exactly 634 of such "landless Arabs." The government offered to resettle them on government land; only a fraction of them accepted this offer. The rest were quickly reabsorbed into agriculture. This is all that the hulabaloo about "landless Arabs" actually amounts to—

except for one more interesting fact. The land that the government offers to these felaheen is land acquired by the Palestine treasury. How did the money get into the treasury? Naturally by taxes. Land is taxed according to its value. The Arab land is almost uniformly neglected; where it is tilled, it is tilled by primitive instruments, yielding little. The Jews have introduced modern machinery and intensive agriculture. Hence, the land in the hands of Jews is extremely valuable, and highly taxed; the Arab land is taxed very lightly. These "landless" Arabs, therefore, who did settle on government land, actually occupy now land purchased with Jewish taxes.

What else are these villainous Zionists doing to the Arabs? According to Mr. Novick, the Arab population has suffered, and Palestine is no longer safe for them. Let us examine this charge. According to sociologists, the best way to determine whether a population is thriving is by measuring (1) the decrease in immigration; (2) the increase in emigration; (3) the decrease of the birth rate and the increase in mortality. (1) Decrease in immigration: the Arab population of Palestine has been swelled during the last two years by a wave of immigration from the Hauran. Between 10,000 and 15,000 Arabs have come into Palestine, seeking the economic opportunities of which they had heard. They did not go to Transjordania, nor to Egypt, nor to Syria; they came to Palestine, evacuating whole villages; it was reported that in some of these villages today one could find only women and children. The population of Arabs in Palestine has increased 28 per cent. Does this prove that the Jews are ruining the Arabs?

(2) Increase in emigration: In a period of ten years, until 1932, 7,000 Arabs left the country; they emigrated at the rate of 600 a year. If anyone wants to know whether this is a lot or a little, he should compare the emigration from Syria during the same period. It totaled 103,000; emigration from Syria in one year exceeded that from Palestine in ten years.

(3) Population: The net increase of the Arab population was 30 per thousand at the time of the last official census. This figure is higher than in that of any other country of the same status (mandate) or of any colonial country. Due to the hospitalization, sanitation, public health, etc., introduced by Jews, the death rate among Arabs has dropped significantly. In the all-Arab city of Nablus, where none of the recent development has taken place, the population increased 8 per cent in ten years; in Haifa, the population increased 87 per cent.

Where do people usually drift? Invariably, they gravitate toward economic opportunity. If they were doing so well before the Jews came, how is it that they have swarmed to centers of Jewish enterprise? The Arabs today are far better off than they ever were.

Mr. Novick further accuses the Zionists of refusing to employ Arab labor, and introducing the racial issue into the economic life. This charge must be carefully studied. The pamphlet to which we refer states specifically that the communists favor unrestricted immigration into Palestine. Mr. Novick attacks the Zionists for limiting labor immigration while capitalists enter the land unrestricted by quotas. It must first be pointed out that the Zionists do not have any jurisdiction over the number of immigrants. This is (as he ought to know, and perhaps does) in the hands of the High Commissioner. If the Zionists had their way they would also lift restrictions on labor immigration; they have appealed time and again for larger immigration schedules. Incidentally, the communists advocate free immigration in one breath, and in the next insist that the Jew remain in the various countries in which they find themselves and solve their economic problems there. Perhaps the communists have solved the problem of how to be in two places at the same time. The Zionists have not.

At any rate, free immigration is advocated. Now, how could free immigration function if Jews employed Arab labor? By the very law of economic de-

termination which the communists preach, it would be inevitable that Jews should employ only Arabs, for the Arabs are willing to work for almost nothing a day. Their standard of living is pitifully low. Would this not constitute discrimination against Jews? Would this not tend to walk right into the trap of exploiting capitalists who seek the cheapest possible labor and will not permit profits to be sacrificed? Demanding that Jews employ Arabs is tantamount to demanding that they employ only Arabs. Besides, Arabs never employ Jews—not in retaliation for anti-Arab propaganda, but as part of the whole Arab outlook, and as sheer economic horsesense. Arabs will not pay higher wages to Jews whom they have no affection for in preference to paying lower wages to Arabs who are of their own group. And the government employs a large percentage of Arabs on government projects. Where then shall Jewish workers find jobs? The only opportunities left open to them are in Jewish enterprises. If those opportunities were deprived them, they might just as well give up the whole idea of settling in Palestine.

The refusal of Jews to employ Arabs, furthermore, does not constitute depriving Arabs of something which rightfully belongs to them. If the Zionists had not come in there would not have been any jobs to squabble over at all. But the most important fact to bear in mind is that the problem of Arab unemployment arises only as a result of the large influx of non-Palestinian Arabs, as for example those of the Hauran. These Arabs came into Palestine because they heard that there was prosperity there. They were not invited; Jews never committed themselves to supporting them. They had no business in Palestine in the first place. To insist that these Arabs be employed by Jews, in preference to Jewish workers, because they came to take advantage of opportunities created by Jews and to escape the starvation of their native places. is the most arrant nonsense.

Zionists are next accused of being reactionaries and thriving on reaction and fascism. Mr. Novick even ventures to remark that "it is to the interests of Zionism that the situation of the Jews in the diaspora shall not improve." We shall try to be very calm as we ask, "Does Mr. Novick, or anybody else, know any Jew, of any class, who honestly hopes that Nazism spreads so that Zionism may thrive?" It is simply amazing that any Jew can be so completely callous to the sentiments of his own people as to imagine that the most zealous Zionist would want to build on the wracked bodies and tortured souls of persecuted Jews. As a matter of fact, if refutation were necessary at all, it would consist of two parts: first, even the most reactionary, capitalistic Jews, who might even sanction fascism, recoil from it when it means anti-Semitism. Secondly, the really zealous Zionist does not welcome the kind of immigrant that the persecuted half-assimilated Jew makes. The recent German immigration into Palestine has brought the kind of Jews who make the national renaissance more difficult. These Jews are unwilling to give up their German culture; they resist assimilation into the new land. They are for the most part individualistic, and do not easily accommodate themselves to the cooperative life which is characteristic of the rural districts and the agricultural colonies. On the contrary, the zealous Zionist wants Jews to come to Palestine who know what it is all about, who are prepared to remake themselves, who are willing to change not only their geography but their habits of thought and behavior.

Mr. Novick is strangely tolerant of the Arab nationalists, led by the effendis. He writes, "Of course this movement still has faults. It is only natural that the effendi elements, the "high" clergymen (who are ever ready to serve the British oppressors) should try to divert the movement of the masses, a movement directed against them, into the channels of race struggle, of pogroms. In such a situation, what should be done? Must the movement be condemned together with

its mis-leaders?" When Arab leaders incite religious hatreds between Arab and Jew in order to win back the Arab masses who are tending to cooperate with the Jewish workers against the feudal system, Mr. Novick blames the mis-leaders. But when the Zionists reclaim desert land, and establish industry, and raise the standard of workers' lives, and organize vast cooperatives and establish a Federation of Workers that numbers 90,000—the movement itself is blamed.

II

Thus far we have attempted to demonstrate that the Zionist movement has wrought definite benefits for the Arab population of Palestine, and that in doing so, it has done them no harm in any respect. It remains now to demonstrate that the Zionist project is actually advancing the cause of workers, and that the dominant group in Zionism, the labor group, is making of Palestine a stronghold of progressive economic and social experiment. The relation of bourgeois Jews in the diaspora to the cooperative movement in Palestine may be compared to the interest which middle class Americans have in the Soviet Union. The whole tendency in communism, recently, has been toward a united front of all progressive elements. Such an organization as the Friends of the Soviet Union is composed of middle class people who are deeply concerned with the gigantic experiment that is being carried on in Russia; and communists are naturally hopeful that such concern with communism in action may help to weld the fragments of anti-fascist elements in America into a solid resistance against further encroachments upon human rights elsewhere. It is not considered a reflection upon communism that bourgeois people lend their support to the development of the Soviet Union.

Similarly, when Jews throughout the world support the Zionist cause, with money or sympathy, the Zionist movement is not thereby transformed into a reactionary force. It is strange, but nevertheless commendable, that conservatives are willing to encourage progressive movements in lands other than their own. An unkind interpretation of their actions may ascribe their support of such movements to their desire to salve their consciences for exploitation at home. It is more likely, however, that these bourgeois elements are actually following their more honest impulses, and are attempting to share in a decent and honorable project to compensate for the unscrupulous tactics to which they are forced to resort by a competitive and individualistic economy in the countries in which they live.

But whatever their motives, they lend support to a cause, in Zionism, which bids fair to take its place with the communist experiment, as one of the most significant movements of the world. For in Palestine, labor has organized itself in a vast Federation, unique among the labor organizations of the world, and especially remarkable for a country occupying a sort of colonial status. This organization is more than a federation of labor unions; it is virtually the nucleus of a cooperative commonwealth. Labor Zionism is committed to the principle of self-labor, to the abolition of exploitation, and absentee-landlordism. In the twenty-five years of its existence, it has organized producers' marketing and consumers' cooperatives, with its own banks, sick and insurance funds, sanitaria, with its own press, libraries and other cultural institutions. In its activities there is no coercion; there is only the demonstration of the superiority of cooperation over competition.

In the agricultural settlements especially, two vital principles of social justice are realized: the national ownership of land and the abolition of exploitation. The first is accomplished through the Jewish National Fund and other public funds which hold the land as the inalienable property of the whole people. Land speculation is obviated. The land is leased to those who work it for their own subsistence and not to those who cultivate it for the profit of landowners. Exploitation is made impossible by the austere

definition given to the term, namely, the payment of wages for work which yields a profit to the employer. No wages can be a fair wage so long as the labor for which it compensates produces surplus value.

These standards do not prevail, of course, in the entire country; the Federation includes, however, at least 85 per cent of the workers of Palestine. And these workers have set the tone for the whole country, so that the sensitiveness of Palestine Jewry has been attuned to social justice. Although the pressure of private enterprise during the last few years has threatened these sensitivities, the *Histadrut* has not weakened. The fact is that the leadership in the World Zionist Organization has been entrusted to the labor group, and in the United States, the sentiment among the General Zionists has been predominantly pro-labor.

Readers of the *New Masses* have been taught to regard the *Histadrut* as a hypocritical organization which pretends to be progressive, but is actually reactionary. This has been most unfortunate. The recent issue of the *New Masses,* especially, which contained an attack upon the *Histadrut* for siding with the British against the communist hunger-strikers, only misled its readers further. The misrepresentations of which the writer of that article is guilty may have been due, in part, to his ignorance. But they are so characteristic of such articles that it is difficult to lend them this liberal construction.

The issues of *Davar,* the official periodical of the *Histadrut,* refute completely the charge that the *Histadrut* supported the government in this strike. *Davar* came out openly for granting the strikers their demands. The Executive Committee of the *Histadrut* did the same; and the Central Committee of the "Working Youth" did likewise. *The Jewish Frontier* reports that "after the hunger strike had lasted for more than two weeks, and it became clear that the government would not yield, the labor press urged the strikers to take food because forcible feeding was imminent. It would have offered the same advice to members of its own party under similar circumstances."

It must be remembered that the communists in Palestine had only a short time before incited the Arabs to pogroms. This incitement, of course, was quickly, but rather lamely, explained by Mr. Novick. He writes, "It is quite possible that a local group, or even the communist organization, because of the lack of forces outside the prisons, did issue a leaflet wherein it was not emphasized sufficiently enough, that the Jewish masses are not at fault. . . ." The leaflet has been designated an "error in principle." Be that as it may, it was hardly to be expected, in view of the fresh memories of this incitement in the mind of the Jewish workers, that they would have been overenthusiastic about protecting the rights of the comunist prisoners. Nevertheless, the *Histadrut* did protest strongly against the conditions of Palestine prisons. After all, "*Histadrut* leaders have sat and do sit in prison."

Whereas communists are quick to find fault with the *Histadrut* even when such fault-finding is based upon false information, they are not quite so eager to learn facts about the influence of the *Histadrut* on Arab labor-organization. Communists should know that, through the influence of Jewish labor-organization, Arabs have begun to learn that there is such a thing as labor solidarity. Not only have the dock-workers' union and similar unions been organized with the help of *Histadrut* leaders, but Jewish workers have been known to go out on strike in sympathy with Arab workers who were locked out. And Arab workers have expressed their solidarity with Jewish workers by doing the same when the situation was reversed.

III

From an examination of the whole Zionist set-up, it is apparent that the only group in Palestine that is threatened by these recent developments is the Arab

effendi class, rather than section of the effendi class which has not yet disposed of its land, and continues to hold thousands of Arab felaheen in serfdom. They see that the Jews have introduced into Palestine a new conception of economic life. They observe the rapid organization of Arab workers, and the demand for higher standards of living. They feel the stirring of a rebellion against the feudal system. The felaheen who still labor for them are being aroused to discontent by the erstwhile felaheen of other effendis who are now independent and self-respecting workers; a comparison of their lot has made a deep impression even upon their primitive understanding. The effendis are worried. True to type, they try to discredit the Jewish project. They instigate dissension between Arab and Jew, and they blame it on the Jews. Communist opposition to Zionism has thus played directly into the hands of the reactionaries. It is surprising and dangerous that the communists should have been misled by the obvious tactics of the reactionaries. From their knowledge of history, they should have understood the inevitability of such effendi tactics. But the communists have nevertheless given whatever support is at their command to the group that stands in the way of the real emancipation of the Arab and Jewish workers of Palestine.

The danger of the communist opposition to Zionism extends beyond its effect upon the constructive work in Palestine. It antagonizes all those Jews who sympathize with Zionism against any program of cooperation with radical forces. The political observer understands how vital such cooperation is. In Germany, the anti-fascist groups did not stand united, and the Nazis came into power. In France, a People's Front managed to give the Croix-de-Feu a staggering blow. In the United States, a united front of all anti-fascist elements could preserve democratic institutions and make possible a bloodless change in the economic structure. As long as the communists continue their ruthless campaign of slander and misrepresentation against Zionism, thousands of Jews—and sympathetic non-Jews—who realize that there is only one little place in the world left for hounded and wretched Jews will grow suspicious of every aspect of the socialist philosophy. Communist attacks on Zionism are therefore not only unwarranted; they are prejudicial to the best interests of all movements which seek to replace the present competitive order with one based on cooperation.

Faith and Reason*

By Abraham S. Halkin**

I

THE struggle between the adherents of Maimonides' theological system which Dr. Sarachek describes in his book forms, as he notes, only one phase in an enduring contest between faith and reason, or, more correctly, between simple faith and rationalized faith. It is to be inexact to regard the rationalists as a party that faced reason squarely. They neither attempted nor claimed to weigh reason and faith in the balance and decide detachedly whether the two were synonymous, supplementary or mutually exclusive. Had they done so, a good many of them might have returned hurriedly to the fundamentalist fold. Instead of tackling the basic question, their policy was to reconcile the two, to win a place in a realm dominated by reason for beliefs and views which

*Joseph Sarachek: Faith and Reason. The Conflict Over the Rationalism of Maimonides. The Bayard Press, 1935.

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they had received as a heritage, and to salvage as much as was appropriate from the onslaught of the dominant force, or at least to reinterpret prevalent doctrines so that they would not be as abhorrent to reason as they would be in their natural garb. They were apologetic in its presence and pleaded with it for the right to retain a part of their religious values.

The ancient and continued contest between the rationalists and the fundamentalists is decidely a study in psychological and not logical approaches. As a result of the numerous influences which contribute towards the evolution of a man's attitudes, the eventual outcome of a religious person's contact with objective reasoning will not be uniform. Some of these people are so overcome by the power of reason that they allow it to become dominant and to subdue or even eradicate earlier attachments and beliefs. Others remain impervious to the attacks of destructive analysis. Between these two stands a group whose members are victims of an inner-conflict, for in their hearts neither faith nor reason has scored a complete victory. The fate of this latter group is tragic indeed. Unlike the unqualified worshipers of reason who have made peace with the outside world, and unlike the fundamentalists who have remained complete by divorcing themselves from the trend of the times, these are beset with cross tendencies, steadily harassed by a guilt of conscience either towards their clear understanding or towards their cherished assumptions and inclinations. They are people in quest, and not only their fellow-seekers but even those who escape their tribulations ought to look on sympathetically and appreciatively at their efforts to effect a compromise in themselves. Whether such a compromise can be reached is very doubtful, but that the need for one is real and urgent is unquestionable.

II

Since every generation is witness to a phase of the clash between faith and reason, the authors who have written the record of their conflict at any stage in human history have usually allowed their personal sentiments to color their work as chroniclers. The outstanding Jewish historians, products of the era of Jewish *Wissenschaft,* who have described the dispute between Maimonists and anti-Maimonists, have naturally taken the side of the rationalists, dubbed the fundamentalists obscurantists, while the rationalists have been styled liberals. Only a few such as Goldziher, for example, have maintained that the liberalism of some of these rationalists is dubious indeed, that it is often coupled with a narrow-mindedness and an intolerance which far outstrip similar characteristics in the opposing camp. In our day it is perhaps more than a coincidence that among the few of the many historians who have aimed at objectivity, who have sought to understand the standpoint of the orthodox, we can count I. Zinberg, the very able historian of Jewish literature residing in the Soviet Union, who has given expression to the fears and anxieties of the opponents of Maimonides' theology.

Dr. Sarachek has limited his investigation to the first century after the death of Maimonides. He examines four phases of the conflict, one of which flared up during Maimonides' life-time. Of these, the most important, judged from the aspect of practical results, is the one which culminated in the burning of the "Guide" and the "Book of Knowledge" in 1232, but the issues involved in the struggle became clearer in the subsequent clashes. The author has made ample use of most primary and numerous secondary sources and has given place in his book to practically every individual who participated in the conflicts. Although this method has resulted in a great deal of repetition and some confusion, it nevertheless offers a complete record which enables one to discover how the many leading personalities of the age sided in this issue. Dr. Sarachek makes a very honest effort to be objective, although one suspects that he leans to the rationalists. He not only gives the scientific approach to religion

but also presents to us the criticisms which the orthodox directed against Maimonides. In citing the opinions of Judah Alfakar, he affords us the opportunity to realize that a number of the fundamentalists were really intelligent and enlightened men.

It appears to me, however, that Dr. Sarachek should not have taken the corporealistic and materialistic beliefs of the orthodox as literally as the rationalists did. They hardly believed that God possessed a body. If they spoke as if they did, it was rather because they resented the definiteness with which the other party said what they believed about God, or because they had biblical verses and aggadic statements in support of their views, although they were aware that they could not plumb the essential meaning of these statements. Dr. Sarachek himself expresses this very adequately on p. 267: "What were the norms and rules which Maimonides had violated? They were the general, commonly accepted teachings, often only concepts, that had not been clearly defined or classified. For example, there was much obscurity about the personality of God. Equally vague were orthodox concepts of soul, prophecy and the world to come. The paradox is that the orthodox did not dogmatize; the rationalists did. It was Maimonides who wrote the creed of thirteen articles."

Dr. Sarachek's account is well-proportioned, lucid and generally adequate. Among his weaker chapters is the discussion of Cabala and rationalism. To my mind, he failed to perceive the objectives of the Cabala, its essential differences from philosophy and the reasons for its greater popularity among Jews during the 13th century and later. The sentence "The classic of the Cabala, the Zohar, was apparently unknown in Provence during the 13th century" is puzzling. Does Dr. Sarachek believe that the Zohar was otherwise in circulation before the days of the 14th century Cabalist Moses ben Shemtob de Leon? To speak of Yedaiah Bedersi as "the greatest Jewish poet of Provence" is somewhat rash. Altogether generalizations are dangerous tools as, for example, the following sentence: "It was the special virtue of the Jewish mind that it dallied early with rationalism, as witness the wisdom books of the Old Testament, the secular knowledge scattered through the Talmud. . . ."

A reading of Dr. Sarachek's book will prove instructive and useful. For one thing, it will convince many how futile the conflict between fundamentalists and rationalists is if either group hopes to demonstrate to the other the essential justness of its position. An unbiased observer will judge the systems by the amount of ennoblement and inner peace which each of them offers, irrespectively of the other.

Correspondence

Sirs:

I have been commissioned by our Reconstructionist Discussion Group which met Monday night to protest against your editorial "A Step in the Wrong Direction."

Can it really be that such clear thinking, analytic minds as compose your editorial board should have permitted themselves to editorialize on an unimportant technicality, and because of that technicality, to oppose a movement with which it is generally in accord?

Your editorial grants the need for conference. It grants further the dire need at this particularly acute time for such conference. You imply therefore that the Congress might be of value. Yet you attack its convening on the ground that it calls itself a Congress and that it does not represent 100 per cent of the Jewish people. Since when have we begun to quibble about names? Since when have we been afraid to do that which we thought was right, because we did not have the support of all who should have supported us?

Furthermore, the Congress does not claim to represent all Jewish organizations or all Jews. It claims to represent only those who will be represented. The 20 Detroit delegates to the Conference will, for example, represent organizations with a total membership of 14,000—most of whom are heads of families, and represent therefore a good majority of the 75,000 Jews in Detroit. Does not this truly indicate the interest of the masses?

Your editorial states further that it would be better if we first created our local community organizations throughout the world. Then would we be able to convene a Congress that would truly represent the voice of Israel.

Surely none who have any concern for the future of Judaism can disagree with you as to the value of planning a unified community. But do you really believe that no action—and particularly in the face of crisis—should be taken to defend civil rights, for example, for the Jews, until all Jewish communities are organized? Furthermore, communities are not being organized on the very broad base that we had hoped for. And they are, in most of those communities which reported at the recent conference of Center Executives in Atlantic City, no more representative of their own communities than, for example, the 20 Jewish Congress delegates from Detroit represent the Jews of Detroit.

In summation then, we grant that the World Jewish Congress cannot truly represent the whole of the Jewish people. (We do not think it claims to do so.) We may even grant, being gracious, that the term — "Conference" is better chosen than "Congress." We accept your opinion that conferences are of value, that a conference of Jews at this time is necessary. We hope with you that some good may come from the intelligent deliberations of those leaders of Jewry who will gather at the World Jewish Congress—Conference, if you will—though we regret that not all of Jewry's leaders will be present at that Conference. Despite this latter fact, however, it cannot be denied that the Congress will be truly representative—and democratically so, of a goodly proportion of world Jewry.

We regret exceedingly that The Reconstructionist should have taken its stand in opposition, and on such grounds, to the World Jewish Congress.

Sincerely yours,
LAVY M. BECKER,
for The Reconstructionist Group
Detroit, Mich., June 12, 1936.

Sirs:

Your editorial of June 12, entitled "A Step in the Wrong Direction" starts out most promisingly with a repudiation of the inhibiting motives which keep the American Jewish Committee from endorsing the World Jewish Congress. Your own objection is a much more self-respecting consideration, namely, that it will not really be a Jewish parliament. You then allude briefly to "a few of the organizations abstaining." Your list is actually, however, not only close to exhaustiveness, but is also less significant than you seem to think. Is it of no importance in your eyes that while 400 orthodox rabbis by a majority vote have indeed declined the invitation to participate, their constituency numbering in the hundreds of thousands—the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of Amercia, the Mizrachi Zionists, and Young Israel—are solidly behind the Congress movement?

But let us consider "the real objection," that the delegates to Geneva will not represent "the whole people." In the first place, you imply that the Congress spokesmen have deliberately ignored the refusal of certain important groups to participate, and are preparing to wield sovereign authority in the name of united Jewry. The error is too obvious to require any further elucidation. Secondly, you seem to believe that representative bodies are regularly elected by a vote of practically all who possess the franchise. Actually, however, a huge fraction of American citizens goes to the polls irregularly if at all. Yet we do have legislative bodies all over the land. It is simply one of the characteristics of the democratic form of representation that it should realize its aim imperfectly.

The editors of The Reconstructionist owe it to their readers to clarify their stand on the World Congress question, apart from the fact that the first meeting of that body will not be fully representative. To those who call to mind the experiences of Zionist leadership during the past generation, the opposition at this stage to the nascent movement should not loom up so large. The handicap which you have pointed out is a real one, but as compared with the question of the value inherent in the World Congress program, it is at best of secondary importance.

Faithfully yours,
JOSHUA STARR,
Secretary to the Congress Commissions of the American Jewish Congress
June 16, 1936